X103

Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts

GCACE

1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

Swap and Shop!

The February 25th meeting will be our annual swap and shop meet. Bring your old equipment and your wallet!

Inside

ATARI®

ATARI® News and Rumours

by Rowland Grant

It seems that game development for the Atari Jaguar game machine may have come to an end. Battlesphere has still not received decryption code. And if they can't go on, other rumoured game development seems unlikely. Of course the Jaguar will not die until nobody uses it. But without some new games, even the most dedicated interest will flag and the Jaguar will become an object only for collectors. While one may use the same word processor for a decade or two, interest in a specific game doesn't usually have the same lasting power.

And there's some not so good news for ST users too. La Terre du Milieu was France's largest Atari dealer. It closed sometime in October 1998. There are rumours that one of Terre du Milieu's former employees is opening a new store catering to Atari users. Floppyshop in the UK is closing on January 30th, 1999. They simply ran out of enough customers to justify continuing. Floppyshop sold PD, shareware and commercial software for the Atari ST. The PD collection is available on 7 CD's. These sell at 12 pounds per copy. Floppyshop would like to hand over their business to other Atari enthusiasts, however there are no takers so far. Most PD distributors are giving up, it is hard to compete with the internet.

Hisoft in Britain used to handle the Papyrus document processor. This a state of the art word processor for TOS computers. There are rumours that Hisoft will not be selling the current version, Papyrus 6. Papyrus is the creation of ROM logicware in Germany. I understand that English versions of Papyrus 6 can be obtained directly from them. Also Papyrus version 7 is rumoured to be nearing release. Papyrus may be the last commercial word processor

See *News and Rumours* on Page 4

GCACE EXECUTIVE

President: Gordon Hooper 475-0857
Email: ghooper@victoria.tc.ca

Vice President: John Picken 598-2386
Email: yg473@victoria.tc.ca

Secretary: Rowland Grant 598-3661
Treasurer: John Towler 382-5083
E-Mail: j.towlerl@genie.geis.com

Editor: Gordon Hooper 475-0857

ST Librarian: Ted Skrecky 598-6173
Email: ud264@victoria.tc.ca

8-Bit Librarian: Cliff Bouvette 598-3904
Email: yd556@freenet.victoria.bc.ca

Director: Noel Black
Email: uy390@victoria.tc.ca

Director: George Rose 652-0572

Director: Craig Carmichael 384-2626
Email: omen@islandnet.com
Director: Bruce Funk 656-1709

CREDITS

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 1000 8-bit public domain disks and 199 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

We have a new corresponding member in the person of John Powell, who lives in Dallas, Texas. John's Atari interest is in the 8-bit, but he also just got an IBM clone. He is interested in corresponding with any of our members who could take the time to send letters or email. His snail mail address is:
John Powell
10650 Galena St.
Dallas, Texas
USA 75228

He can also be contacted by email at: pop_corn@swbell.net

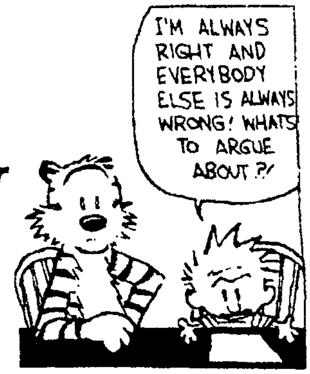
Gord

FOR HELP CALL:

Club Information:	Gord Hooper	475-0857
	Rowland Grant	598-3661
8-Bit Applications:		
Bellcom disks	John Picken	598-2386
DOS & Operating System	John Picken	598-2386
Games	Ted Skrecky	598-6173
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	Bob Nex	642-6358
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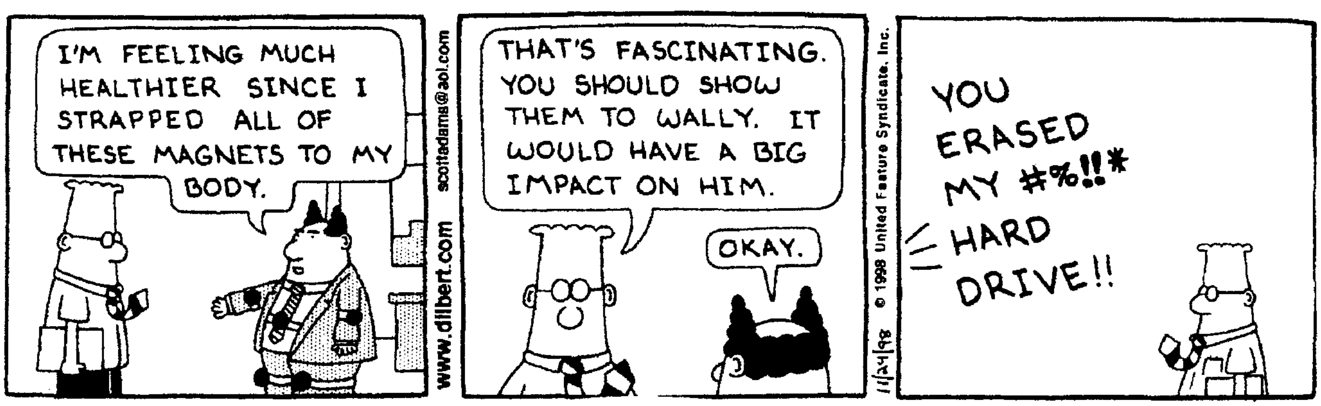
PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper



...Welcome to new member JOHN POWELL, from Dallas, Texas. John is interested in corresponding with GCACE members and you can get his addresses in the editorial on page 2. Another new corresponding member is CONN NAST from Chemainus, B.C. Conn, as a corresponding member, is entitled to five free disks from our collection. I sent him our catalogue to choose from. Even DOUG SKRECKY let some moths out of his wallet when he opened it to renew. Lots of renewals this month, so forgive me if I miss anyone. DENNIS BATE, who is thinking about buying an iMAC renewed, as did ARNOLD NAPP, TED SKRECKY, LARRY EGGLETON and BOB AHRENS... The executive was in search mode trying to determine where our five boxes of the Bellcom library were. It turned out that they had been in my basement, and that I had given them to NOEL BLACK when he came to pick up something else. The only problem was I didn't remember doing it. I think that calls for another vodka... ROWLAND GRANT has recovered from his open heart surgery to the point where he made the January executive and general meetings. It was good to see him back... The January meeting was the occasion for our annual acclamations, uh, I mean elections. At any rate the usual gang of reprobates was installed as our executive again. I am still Overall-Supreme-President-for-Life, JOHN PICKEN is vice-president in charge of beer, ROWLAND GRANT is secretary, which is a good thing as he is the only one who can write down a reasonable set of minutes after hearing the chaos that occurs at meetings, TED SKRECKY, as the only person in Victoria who knows how to download from the Freenet, is once again ST Librarian, CLIFF BOUVETTE is 8-bit Librarian, which the rest of the executive is thankful for because he brings goodies he bakes himself to executive meetings, JOHN TOWLER is treasurer, which is good because he can add and subtract, unlike some of us, even if he never brings free samples from the liquor store where he works, GEORGE ROSE is a director again, which Picken is thankful for because the beer is free when we meet at George's house, BRUCE FUNK is still a director, which I am thankful for because I am using a keyboard from one of his Mega's while I get mine fixed, CRAIG CARMICHAEL, who is our never-fail fallback when we can't come up with a demonstration for the meetings is a director, as is NOEL BLACK, who we hope will be feeling better soon so he can once again attend meetings, not to mention put up a bulletin board for the club... Now for some more humour which pretty well describes my life, thanks to Doug Skrecky... I started out with nothing....I still have most of it. When did my wild oats turn to prunes and All Bran? I finally got my head together, now my body is falling apart. Funny, I don't remember being absent minded. It is easier to get older than it is to get wiser. The first rule of holes: If you are in one, stop digging. I tried to ge a life once, but they were out of stock. I went to school to become a wit, only got halfway through. It was all so different before everything changed. Some days you're the dog, some days you're the hydrant. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be. I wish the buck stopped here. I could use a few). Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die... Don't forget to take your sneaky pills and spy on other members. This column depends on your dastardly input. Phone GORD a 475-0857...

DILBERT



Continued from Page 1

for TOS computers still in development. And in the field of desk top publishing, there are rumours that MGI in Canada has been forced to drop Calamus 95 for Windows. MGI could undersell the competition, but in the strange world of PC software marketing that may not have been sufficient. The good news is that the Atari version is still supported by Invers Media Verlag in Germany. In fact they still distribute the English version of Calamus SL.

Computer Dungeon was a popular source of new and used Atari software. It was operated by Al Horton for a couple of years, until lack of time and energy forced him to close. Later Al opened Computer Dungeon again for a few months, then he moved to Florida. It seems that Al Horton will not reopen Computer Dungeon anytime soon, but he does promise a non-commercial Web page. And with regards to the web, Toad Computers has not supported Atari products since 1996. However it did continue to operate two popular web sites www.ataricentral.com and www.atari.net which still average 9271 requests per day. Now Toad has put these site names and the associated data up for auction. I haven't heard of anyone buying them.

The Milan is a TOS computer made in Germany. It is cheaper than the other TOS clones such as the Hades and Medusa. They say that there are already more Milan computers in use than the total of Hades and Medusa computers. But nobody is quoting numbers. Up to now, the Milan has been sold as a complete operating computer. Now, you can buy the motherboard only and add your own case, power supply, memory and storage components. In fact the Milan seems to be exported as a motherboard kit. This includes the Milan mainboard with a 25Mhz 68040 fitted, a graphics card S3 V64+, driver software, Milan Multi-OS 1.25 on CD, cables for internal connections and a manual. The suggested retail price is DM999. A SCSI card is available for DM199. Also a Motorola 68080 (that's what they said!) upgrade has been advertised recently at DM999. The Milan is now being sold in Britain by Titan Designs and Systems Solutions with an English version of MilanOS (N.AES). No dealer has Milan computers on hand in North America as far as I know. Godfather's Computer has received no reply from Milan's makers.

The Milan is a TOS computer made in Germany... which is cheaper than TOS clones Hades and Medusa.

Systems for Tomorrow has been said to be a Milan dealer, however they have not announced that they have any Milans in stock. Bengy Collins says that he is talking with Milan Computers and hopes to be a North American dealer, or at least the Canadian dealer. That would be handy.

The Milan motherboard comes with a graphics card. This is because a specific software driver is needed for each card. At least this is so on TOS computers. The world's best graphics chips are made in Canada by ATI. The new Macintosh computers will be using ATI chips exclusively. I understand that an ATI Rage Pro card is being modified by MW Electronics (Germany) for use in the Hades computer. Both the card and the software driver are expected to be available about now.

For those of us who don't have a Hades computer to upgrade, there are other possibilities. Mario Becroft of New Zealand has been making small hardware items that improve or change the ST. He has released the mouse cable that adapts a PC serial mouse to work on an Amiga or ST. He also created an IDE device interface for STe computers. Now he has completed a video adapter for the ST that allows the use of VGA monitors in monochrome high resolution. This handy if you want a large screen. Mario is also producing an interface for PC keyboard and mouse. Some of these products may be available from Ken Macdonald in Toronto.

Mario Becroft also programs software for the ST. His latest effort is a PD Pacman game that runs in a GEM window. Marshall Lake has announced that the commercial game, A Day at the Races for the ST, has been released as shareware. This is a simulation of the horse racing environment. Patrice Mandin has been working on DOOM for the Falcon. A functioning copy of his DOOM engine is available. It uses graphics data files from the PC game. It works, but slowly. Lots of RAM and an accelerated CPU is recommended. For the ST there is a sort of DOOM clone called Hellgate (I believe) that is programmed in STOS. It is still under development and has been well received so far. And finally, Colin Polonowski maintains that his Atari Times Newsletter is still alive. For a few years Colin produced a print version of Atari Times, then a disk magazine. Now he is continuing Atari Times as an on-line publication. He also plans to occasionally publish a printed Atari Times Special Edition. The next of these printed editions is due in February. Colin is requesting submissions for publication.

Annual Statement

by Rowland Grant

As I was unable to attend the last series of general meetings I have nothing first hand to report. Of course I am aware that in November, Craig Carmichael demonstrated his digital camera. In order for the output of such a camera to be displayed on a computer monitor, some special software is needed. Craig writes his own software which operates under OASES. OASES runs on Atari ST/TT Falcon computers and the Macintosh. Unfortunately Craig's Falcon had only 4MB of RAM and couldn't handle the amount of digital information from the camera. So Craig had to bring his Mac to the meeting. I have seen the printouts of the digital images Craig took of the meeting. They have excellent resolution and realistic colour values. The images that I saw were printed using the Falcon, now expanded to 14MB.

As you know, our Annual General Meeting takes place in January. At this meeting we elect a slate of officers for the Club. We also review the annual financial statement for 1998. Shown in the next column is that financial statement. It was shouted to me by Treasurer John Towler across a noisy room (that's because the president is an idiot who loses control of the meetings. Ed.) at the last executive meeting. Executive meetings are always noisy. While my hearing is not as acute as it used to be, and at meetings I am prone to brief but profound lapses of attention, I think I have the numbers right. Anyway it adds up. And hey, we have a surplus! What's better, we have money in the bank and no debt to pay down.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1998

INCOME	
Dues and donations	610.42
PD disks etc.	47.50
Coffee	34.90
Bank interest	0.73
Total income	693.55
EXPENDITURES	
Newsletter	141.60
Newletter postage	119.49
Other postage	11.88
Room rental	235.40
Coffee	15.57
Office supplies	1.28
Magazines	19.66
Bank charges	6.00
Societies Act	15.00
Total expenditures	565.88
SURPLUS	127.67
ASSETS	
Bank balance	777.06
Prepaid room rent	235.40
Total Assets	1012.46

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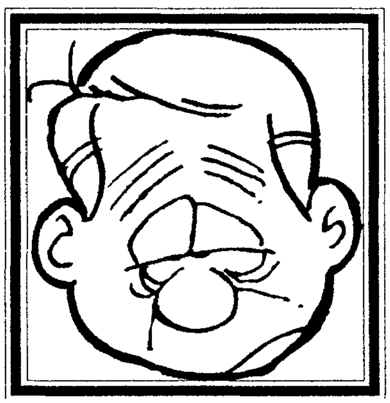
New Atari User About To End

by Rowland Grant

I notice that Alan Reeve is making the binary code of his Diamond GOS available to anyone who can use it. Diamond Graphic Operating System is a programmable GUI environment created around 1988 for the Atari 8-bit computers. It offered moveable windows, mouse support, icons etc., and it could work in place of Atari DOS. Unfortunately there weren't too many applications made to take advantage of its features. Reeve Software did release a paint program, a word processor and a developer's kit. I am not aware of any other Diamond based software. Diamond came in a 64K cartridge that bank-switched in the upper 8K of RAM like SpartaDOS-X. In fact Alan Reeve had his cartridges made by ICD, the publisher of SpartaDOS. While some felt that Diamond GOS was not a useful or appropriate operating system for an 8-bit Atari, about one thousand cartridges were sold. When ICD stopped making the special cartridges with the bank-switching circuitry, development of Diamond GOS and its associated software came to an end. Now Alan has released a ROM image of Diamond GOS 3.0 that can be used to burn an 27512 e-prom. Those with earlier versions of Diamond could update by replacing the ROM in the cartridge. Possibly emulators could be made to use the Diamond GOS ROM image.

Les Ellingham has published New Atari User (formerly Page6) magazine for the last sixteen years. No other Atari magazine has lasted as long. Originally, publishing NAU yielded a fairly good living. The returns gradually become more modest, and recently Les has had to support himself by other means. There is little time left for New Atari User. So Les has decided to cease publication after the next six issues. He will accept new subscriptions and renewals, but only for the number of issues remaining. Anyway, New Atari User should be with us until the turn of the century.

There is continuing support for users of Atari 8-bit emulators on the PC. Rich Stone has released version 2.5 of Atari800Win. This is a beta release. It is mostly bug fixes, although there are a few new features too. Andri MacFaulkner is looking for Atari assembler programmers to test his new ASSI - Atari 6502 cross assembler. It runs on a PC under Windows. Bo Schreurs has updated his DIR2ATR software that turns PC directories containing Atari 8-bit files into ATR disk images. The latest version 5.0 can create disk images in SpartaDOS format. It also supports SpartaDOS subdirectories. All the authors of these programs are requesting bug reports.



GCACE is sad another Atari icon, New Atari User, is going under!

Bob Klass bought the rights to BBS Express! Professional some years ago. It was used by the Pothole BBS and a number of other Atari 8-bit boards in North America. Bob has passed this software on to Lance Rinquist who develops Atari 8-bit software under the Video 61 label. Bob is hoping that Lance will find time to continue developing this excellent BBS software.

One or two issues back, I reported on the JAM interface. This allows game machines and Atari 8-bit computers to use a VGA monitor as a display. There are now reports that the Atari XEP80 does not work very well with JAM. The XEP80 is an 80 column text generator and has its own separate composite output. However, there are reports that 80 column fonts produced by software look good on VGA monitors.

Curt Vendel notes that Computer Software Services is still advertising the Black Box interface and the Floppy Board Disk drive adapter. Of course that doesn't mean that there is any of this hardware immediately available in stock.

Kurt Vendel calls himself the curator of the Atari Historical Society. He reports that Atari manufactured the 815 dual disk drive unit containing two 360K drives. Apparently 450 units were produced, but most were recalled before they could be sold. So only a few Atari 815 drives remain in existence. Back in 1980, the 815 drive would have enabled the Atari 800 to compete directly with the Apple II in the business, professional and eduction markets. In 1980 the Apple II only typed in capital letters, and accessing the disk drives was a pain. (I know, I had one at work.) The Atari 800 produced upper and lower case letters, and its DOS and device handling system was much superior. But nobody in Atari wanted to tangle with Apple (and Steve Jobs), so they wimped out and changed focus. Atari decided that the home would be the market for Atari 400/800 computers. They released the 90K single sided 810 drive only. And as we know, Atari didn't compete very effectively in the home market either. Atari never did make a profit from computer sales, at least not until Jack Tramiel took over.

Atari Pooldisk Too

by Rowland Grant

For some years now, PC computers have been used as accessories to Atari 8-bit computers. With software such as SIO2PC or APE, and a special connecting cable from the PC serial port to one of the SIO ports in the Atari 8-bit equipment chain, it is possible for the Atari to use all the PC storage devices, disk drives, hard drives and CD-ROMs. Usually the Atari software files are stored on the PC in the form of disk images. These are PC files the size of an 8-bit disk (usually 92K). They have the .ATR file name extender. Obviously a disk image could hold a number of 8-bit files.

Atari ST users can emulate Atari 8-bit computers using Xformer software, and of course Xformer can access the ST's storage devices. Xformer also uses disk images, but in its own format having the .XFD extender. Like all ST files, these are in MS-DOS format and are PC compatible. Xformer can transfer files or whole disks to normal 8-bit floppies on an Atari 8-bit disk drive through a cable connected to the ST's printer port.

B.F.(Bo) Schreurs is an Atari 8-bit enthusiast in Holland. He has a large collection of 8-bit public domain and shareware software. A few years ago it became practical to put all this software on a CD-ROM, and in the fall of 1995 Bo released his XL/XE POOLDISK version 1.0 CD. The files were mainly disk images in ATR format that were duplicated in XFD format. Response to POOLDISK was favourable and a second edition was planned. Bo's brother Ernest became more directly involved in the project. For version 2.0 they asked all their contacts to send in new material. There was a good response. Even our Club was involved in the project. We sent hundreds of Bellcom images in ATR format to Holland (on two zip disks). Soon they had enough files to fill a CD in ATR disk image format alone. The XFD format was dropped, but they created utilities that would convert ATR files to XFD format for Xformer users. There was more material, text files picture files, emulators and 8-bit files that had not been converted to disk images. There was enough to fill a second CD. So they decided to issue a set of two CD's under the title POOLDISK TOO. Ian Chadwick allowed them to put the text of Mapping the Atari on the Pooldisk. And this excellent book's many pages had to be copied into ASCII. A task that delayed POOLDISK production for months. Finally POOLDISK TOO was released at the ABBUC annual meeting in October 1998 in Germany.

POOLDISK TOO is attractively packaged and labelled. The first CD contains the disk images in sixty folders or subdirectories which I refer to as "collections". Most of these collections are relatively small. However the ABBUC collection has 875 image files, ACE has 341, Bellcom is complete with 968, Hamburg Atari Public Domain Service contributed 820, Stichting Atari Gebruikers (Hackers?) 221, Suburban Chicago Atarians 209, Thunderdome BBS sent 346 and 446 were obtained from the UMich base. The very small collections mostly contain unique software donated by the programmer. There are also a number of disk magazines such as Futura, and Top Mag. Many of the collections were created or assembled by organizations that no longer exist. I counted 6220 disk images. Incidentally, a double-sided 8-bit disk makes two images. Since most disks have a number of files on them, the CD contains an enormous number of programs. So much, that the index file listing them all is 20 megabytes in size. However, (as I discovered) some disks have lots of unused space on them too, so we cannot say that the CD is filled to capacity. Also I noticed many duplicate files. Nevertheless, this CD must be the largest Atari 8-bit software collection assembled so far.

The second CD has 14 major items in subdirectories. There is a huge collection of HTML and GIF format files from the Internet. A web browser would be handy here. Mapping The Atari is another big directory. Incidentally permission to include "Mapping" was given on the understanding that users would not be distribute it further. There are files of Jaguar and 8-bit game animation. A huge directory devoted to PC software, divided into 86 subdirectories, pertains mainly to Atari 8-bit use. Included are emulators, cross-assemblers and all sorts of utilities. There is a picture directory with JPG images of Atari equipment, personalities and trivia. There is a large directory of text files. Many 8-bit software files did not get into disk image format. These are included on the second CD. Among them are the more recent 8-bit files from UMich. There are five smaller directories containing 8-bit Infocom data the can be used by the Amiga, a 6502 cross-assembler for CPM computers, PC software for programming the Jaguar and 8-bit emulators that run on the Macintosh, the ST or Falcon. Finally there is the huge 20 MB index file listing all the software files on the first CD.

See *Pooldisk* on Page 8

For Sale

by James Sarantides

GENERAL HARDWARE

Monitor master $15.00 allows mono & color monitor to be switched w/o unplugging
Joysticks $7.00 ea. 2 for $10.00
1 meg memory simm chips $15.00 ea

Copies of following software with full docs $9.00 each or 3 for $23.00 unless otherwise noted

MUSIC

Band in a box Edit Track Sequencer
Ez score Notator Gen edit Synth editor Xor synth editor/ librarian cz android Gen patch synth patch bulk dump synth view 8000

UTILITIES

MOS Hard Disk utilities
Icd Hard Disk Utilities
Warp 9 Hard drive accelerator
Diamond Back up Utilitites
Data Diet Compress data to occupy less space on hard drive
Quick st 3
Universal item selector
Cheetah 3 Turbo kit
Neo Desk Add program icons to your desk top
Virus Killer

Modem communication programs
Interlink, STalker, Stealth

GENERAL PROGRAMS

BBS setup Original box!
Payroll $12.00 Original box!
Word perfect
Word writer
Page stream desk top publisher $15.00
Legal letters
1st cad
STalk the market

GAMES

Factory sealed $8.00 each
Rambo Space
Hello Harrier
Harvey Davidson
Game copies $3.00 each 6 for $15.00 Many with full docs !!
Sex Vixens $6.00
Strip poker $6.00
Pinball wizard Spider man
Turbo cup International karate
Harrier Silent service
Grand Slam Action fighter
Ball Asteroids deluxe subtle Dragon ninja
Super man Hostage
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Techno Cop Sky Fox
Side Winder Dive-bomber
Space Quest Vindicator
Marble madness Test Drive
Star Raiders Star Wars
Xenon Harman Flight Simulator
Scrabble Airbag Ultima 2
Chess Master Wrestling
Baseball Basketball
Hardball Golf 10th Frame
Ultima 4 Chess Master 2000

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Email: midil@flash.net

Pooldisk
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You can order this double CD by sending a cheque or money order drawn on a U.S. bank for $20 (US) to:

Ernest R. Schreurs
Kempenlandstraat 8 5211 VN
Den Bosch The Netherlands

The price includes shipping by airmail. You should be able to buy a money order for U.S. funds, drawn on a U.S. bank from any Canadian bank.

POOLDISK TOO represents an enormous amount of work. It is a bargain at the price. Every Atari 8-bit enthusiast who has access to a PC or ST with a CD-ROM drive should have a copy of POOLDISK TOO.

Our Club's Bellcom collection went missing (it's OK we found it eventually). We discovered it was missing when we had a request for some Bellcom disks. We filled the order using disk images remaining from our work for POOLDISK. It occurred to me then that POOLDISK could serve as a back-up for much of our Club 8-bit library. In fact it could be the Club library in itself. However, a good library must be catalogued, indexed and cross-referenced in such a way that anyone can find what they are looking for quickly. POOLDISK TOO is not quite that well catalogued, (neither is our own 8-bit library). But it is a good start. A cheap PC with a few Gigs of hard drive space should be all the equipment needed to turn POOLDISK into a first class PD library for any club. That and a lot of dedicated time. The POOLDISK collection can be expanded. There are many Atari clubs that could have participated, such as Club Cenacle in France. Also I realize that our Club could have contributed more than the Bellcom ATR images. Ah well, maybe next time.